

Date: **Wednesday 26 November 2003**

Venue: **Committee Room, National Assembly for Wales**

Title: **Community Health Council Regulations**

Purpose

The Committee decided at its meeting of 16th July 2003 that it wished to give further consideration to the draft Community Health Council Regulations.

Summary / Recommendations

The draft regulations set out the arrangements for Community Health Councils (CHCs) in Wales. They add some important new functions, such as enhanced visiting rights and the provision of an independent complaints advocacy service. They also set out new arrangements for CHC membership and the provisions for the setting up of the new all-Wales Community Health Council Board.

The Committee is asked to note the outcome of the 12-week consultation, which ended on 10th October 2003, at Annex 1, and to comment on the draft regulations.

A final set of regulations will be available for the Committee to consider at its January meeting, if the Committee takes the view that it would like to see them once again. It is proposed that the regulations will come into force from 1st April 2004.

Background

The Health (Wales) Act 2003 received Royal Assent on 8 April 2003. The Act amends the National Health Service Act 1977 and gives the Assembly additional powers to make Regulations concerning CHCs in Wales. These powers were sought because the Assembly wanted to be able to:

- Change the name of CHCs (no decision has been taken on this yet and even if it is decided to do

so, a name change would be effected via an Order, not through Regulations);

- Change the number and boundaries of CHCs in Wales (there are no intentions to use this in the foreseeable future, and again this would be effected via an Order);
- Change the proportion of CHC members drawn from local authorities and the voluntary sector to make CHC membership more representative of the local population, and to make the appointment process more open and transparent;
- Place a duty on CHCs to provide independent complaints advocacy services;
- Give CHCs the power to enter any premises where NHS care is provided, including primary care and nursing home premises (where NHS funded care is provided) and
- Create a new statutory all-Wales body for CHCs in Wales, in light of the abolition of the Association of CHCs in England and Wales (ACHCEW).

A new set of draft regulations on CHCs was issued for 12 weeks' consultation on 21st July 2003. These set out the functions of CHCs and matters relating to membership. Much of the content of the new Regulations is similar to the existing 1996 CHC regulations, with the addition of provisions relating to the last four bullet point items above, i.e. membership, complaints advocacy, powers of entry and the new all-Wales body.

Consideration

Fifty five responses were received to the consultation exercise and these are addressed in the consultation report. Some revisions to the draft regulations will be made, to take account of comments received. These include:

- Minor drafting points, definitions and typographical errors;
- A reconsideration of the wording of Regulation 6 on voluntary bodies where it currently states that the Assembly will determine which ones shall be invited to take part in the appointment of members;
- A reconsideration of the dates on which annual reports should be submitted (Regulations 16 and 28);
- A rewording of Regulation 18 to reflect the need for a statutory consultation process and consideration of comments received that a comparison be made with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Regulations which apply in England;
- An amendment to Regulation 20 to require CHCs to co-operate with statutory inspectorate bodies;
- Further consideration of whether there needs to be mention of a maximum number of unannounced visits in Regulation 20 (3) and whether there needs to be rewording to reflect concerns on the use of unannounced visits.

Financial Implications

An additional recurrent sum of £550k was secured in the Budget Planning Round 2002 for the strengthening and development of CHCs. There are no further financial implications to the Assembly

resulting from this legislation.

Cross Cutting Themes

Social care - enhanced visiting rights to enable CHCs to enter any premises where NHS care is provided have an impact on those providing services under the Care Standards Act 2000. Officials are co-operating with the care home sector in establishing a protocol for working relationships between its members, CHCs and the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales.

Local government – changes to the proportion of CHC membership will reduce the number of local authority members. County borough councils and the Welsh Local Government Association have been consulted on these changes. Officials are also co-operating with them in order to introduce change seamlessly and for future appointments to be made in accordance with good practice.

There are no other cross cutting themes. It is not considered necessary to refer any matters to other Committees.

Action for Subject Committee

The Committee is asked to note this paper and the outcome of the consultation at Annex 1.

Jane Hutt
Minister for Health and Social Services

Contact Points:

David Boyland, Performance, Quality and Regulation Division, Tel: 029 2082 5537;
Pat Vernon, Performance, Quality and Regulation Division, Tel: 029 2082 1427

ANNEX 1

DRAFT COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL REGULATIONS 2003

CONSULTATION REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE BY

MS JANE HUTT, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

ON

26th NOVEMBER 2003

DRAFT COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL REGULATIONS 2003

CONSULTATION REPORT

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
Background	6
List of consultees	7
List of respondents	9
Summary of responses and comment from the Welsh Assembly Government	11

Background

The National Assembly for Wales decided some time ago to retain the 20 Community Health Councils (CHCs) in Wales and to strengthen their functions and standing as independent bodies. CHCs are to be abolished in England and replaced by a combination of Patients' Forums, Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) based in trusts, and Independent Complaints Advocacy Services (ICAS).

In April 2003, the Health (Wales) Act was given Royal Assent. This amends the National Health Service Act 1977 gives the Assembly additional powers to make orders relating to the naming and boundaries of CHCs in Wales, and regulations relating to their functions and to the setting up of an all-Wales body for CHCs. These powers were sought because the Assembly wants CHCs to have a key role in the full and active involvement of patients and the public in decision-making at all levels of the NHS in Wales. The CHC provisions contained in the Health (Wales) Act will be commenced with effect from 13th October 2003.

A new set of regulations has been drafted, to replace the Community Health Council Regulations 1996. These set out provisions for CHC membership, proceedings, finance and performance of functions, as well as the arrangements for a new all-Wales body for CHCs. CHCs are to be given the responsibility of

providing an independent complaints advocacy service across the whole of Wales, and a new power to enter and inspect premises wherever NHS funded care is provided.

The draft regulations have been subject to a 12-week consultation period, from 21st July to 10th October 2003. Over 160 stakeholders and interested parties, including all Assembly Members, were consulted and 55 replies were received.

List of consultees

Academy of the Royal Colleges in Wales
Age Concern Cymru
Assembly Members
Association of Welsh Community Health Councils
Association of Public Health Observatories
Audit Commission
Breast Test Wales
British Medical Association (Wales)
Care Forum Wales*
Centre For Health Leadership Wales
Chair- All Wales Committee For Health Care Professionals
Chief Executive of Health Professions Wales
Chief Nursing Officer for Wales
Chief Scientific Officer, National Assembly for Wales
Children's Commissioner for Wales
Commission For Health Improvement
Commission For Racial Equality
Community Health Councils- Chairs and Chief Officers
Community Practitioners Health Visitors Association (CPHVA) Wales
Confederation of British Industries
County Borough Councils in Wales
Department Of Health
District Audit Service
Environment Agency
Equal Opportunities Commission
Food Standards Agency
Health and Safety Executive
Health Professions Wales
Health Solutions Wales
Help the Aged Cymru
Home Office
Information Officer Disability Wales
Institute of Healthcare Management (Wales)
Institute of Welsh Affairs

Joint Committee for the Ethnic Minorities in Wales
Local Government Data Unit
Local Health Boards
NHS Trusts
Nurse Executives Wales
Nursing and Midwifery Council
Public Health Laboratory Service/ Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre
Registered Nursing Home Association
Royal College of Midwives Welsh Board
Scottish Executive
Specialised Health Services Commission for Wales
Trade Unions (AEEU, GMB, MSF, TGWU, UCATT, UNISON)
University of Glamorgan
University of Wales, Aberystwyth
University of Wales, Bangor
University of Wales, College of Medicine, Caerleon
University of Wales, College of Medicine, Cardiff
University of Wales, Swansea
UWIC, Cardiff
Voluntary Sector Assembly Liaison Council for Voluntary Action
Wales Cancer Registry
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Wales Office of Research and Development
Wellcome Trust
Welsh Assembly Government Policy Leads
Welsh Clinical Psychology Advisory Committee
Welsh Collaboration for Health and Environment
Welsh Combined Centres for Public Health
Welsh Dental Committee
Welsh Food Alliance
Welsh General Practitioners Committee
Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care
Welsh Local Government Association
Welsh Medical Committee
Welsh National Blood Service
Welsh Nursing and Midwifery Committee
Welsh Ophthalmic Committee
Welsh Pharmaceutical Committee
Welsh Scientific Advisory Committee
Working group of NHS officers and Assembly officials set up to consider development of consultation guidance to replace WHC(91)47 **.

* meeting held with Care Forum Wales on 6th October 2003

** meeting of the Working Group held on 4th September 2003

List of written respondents

1. Age Concern Cymru
2. Association of Welsh Community Health Councils
3. Audit Commission
4. Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board
5. British Medical Association Cymru Wales
6. Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust
7. Caerphilly Local Health Board
8. Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust
9. Cardiff Community Health Council
10. Care Forum Wales
11. Ceredigion Community Health Council
12. Ceredigion County Council
13. Clwyd Community Health Council
14. Conwy Community Health Council
15. Conwy County Borough Council
16. Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust
17. Conwy Local Health Board
18. Denbighshire County Council
19. Denbighshire Local Health Board
20. Environment Agency
21. Flintshire County Council
22. Gwent Community Health Council
23. Health Professions Wales (replied but no comments made)
24. Joint Committee for the Ethnic Minorities in Wales
25. Medical Protection Society
26. Merthyr and Cynon Valley Community Health Council
27. Montgomery Community Health Council
28. Neath and Port Talbot Community Health Council
29. Neath Port Talbot Local Health Board
30. North West Wales NHS Trust
31. NSPCC Cymru/Wales
32. Pembrokeshire Community Health Council
33. Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust
34. Mr Gwyn Phillips
35. Pontypridd and Rhondda NHS Trust
36. Pontypridd Rhondda Community Health Council

37. Mr David Smith
38. Mrs Hilda Smith
39. Swansea Community Health Council
40. Swansea Local Health Board
41. Swansea NHS Trust
42. The Triangle Project
43. TUC Wales
44. Tutton, Rev. Ian, Member, Cardiff Community Health Council
45. UNISON
46. University of Glamorgan, School of Care Sciences
47. Vale of Glamorgan Community Health Council
48. Vale of Glamorgan Local Health Board
49. Velindre NHS Trust
50. Wales Council for Voluntary Action
51. Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust
52. Welsh Local Government Association
53. Welsh Nursing and Midwifery Committee
54. Wrexham Local Health Board
55. Ynys Mon Local Health Board

Summary of responses and comment from the Welsh Assembly Government

The consultation document invited general comments on the draft regulation and also asked ten specific questions. The summaries below appear in the same order as the draft regulations and deal with general comments and responses to the specific questions together.

Part I – General provisions and definitions (Regulation 1)

Some comments were received about certain existing definitions and suggestions made for new ones, for example, should "chairman" and "primary care services" be defined?. There was also a query about the definition of a "relevant Trust". One correspondent made some detailed drafting points.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

The Assembly legal team will consider these suggestions for possible inclusion in the final draft.

Part II – Membership (Regulations 2-10)

1. Membership proportions

The regulations allow for a change in membership proportions, reducing those members drawn from the local authority and voluntary sectors to one quarter each, with the remaining half to be appointed by the

Assembly. Most respondents thought that this would result in more places for members of the local community and thought there were clear advantages to this proposal. A small number of respondents opposed the changes on the grounds that they might reduce local democratic accountability and place too much power in the hands of the Assembly. Some correspondents felt that Regulation 6(1) which states that the Assembly shall determine the voluntary organisations to be invited to make appointments was wrong and placed unnecessary restrictions on the sector.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

Regulation 7 sets out the principles that should apply to all appointments, including those made by the Assembly. We are committed to fair and open competition and ensuring that candidates with the right skills and experience are appointed. Officials will reconsider the wording of Regulation 6 to ensure that it is fair and equitable.

2. Attracting CHC members and improving the recruitment process

There were some suggestions around improvements to the recruitment process through targeting of publicity to harder to reach groups. Some respondents suggested that a recruitment pack and good practice guidance should be made available to local authorities and the voluntary sector so that all candidates could be familiar with the work of the CHC and know the level of commitment required. It was also the view of a number of respondents that a detailed person specification should be developed to ensure that candidates have the skills required to perform as a CHC member. CHCs themselves felt that they should be able to have more input into recommending candidates for interview, e.g. existing co-opted members and people on public reference groups. It was also felt by several respondents that individuals involved in voluntary organisations and local authorities should be able to apply to be individual members through the Assembly appointments procedure.

There were some useful comments on how the Assembly could raise the profile of CHCs through a national publicity campaign in order to create more opportunities for people in harder to reach groups. Others felt more people would be attracted to CHC membership if they could take time off work to allow them to be on CHCs, or if childminding support was offered. There was also comment about the involvement of children and young people and suggestions on how CHCs could make themselves more accessible. It was suggested that good practice guidelines could be developed for involving children and young people.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

Officials are already looking at how better to target advertising and publicity, though a pilot being conducted in Denbighshire. Lessons learned from that pilot will inform the wider recruitment process and the useful comments received on how to create more opportunities for harder to reach groups will be given careful consideration. We are also working on a national publicity campaign to raise the profile of CHCs more generally. We will be working with the local authority and voluntary sectors on the

development of good practice guidance and person specifications. We accept that any individual may apply for an Assembly appointment, irrespective of whether they hold a position with a local authority or a voluntary organisation, so long as there is no conflict of interest, or none of the disqualification criteria set out at Regulation 9 applies.

Approaches to the relevant Government department have been made to have CHCs added to the list of bodies whose members are entitled to time off work to carry out their duties. Unfortunately, the request was refused on the basis that other non-statutory means could first be used to widen CHC membership. This is now being addressed through the publicity strategy in development. The Welsh Assembly Government will be happy to work with CHCs and children's organisations to develop guidelines for involving children and young people in the work of CHCs and officials will take this forward.

3. Proposed timescale for introduction of the changes in membership

Most respondents felt that the proposed timescale of 2006 was realistic and achievable, although there were some concerns about the loss of expertise and that the appointments process needed to be carefully handled in order to avoid this. A small number of respondents felt that 2006 was not quick enough when contrasted with some of the past changes in health and local government. One correspondent wished to extend the timeframe to 2008.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

It is felt that the proposed timescale of 2006 is about right and there are no plans to alter this.

4. Eligibility criteria

There was a suggestion from more than one respondent that members should live within the CHC area to which they are appointed and that all appointments should be subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks. Some CHCs felt that it should be possible for members to serve more than a maximum of eight years if the member was performing well, and that CHCs should be able to make recommendations about the reappointment of individuals under these circumstances. One respondent felt that there should be more flexibility to renew co-opted members' annual terms of office. Another felt that the bar on being a member of both a CHC and a LHB was unduly restrictive.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

It is agreed that CHC members ought to be subject to CRB checks and we will consider how this is to be done and whether this should also apply to co-opted members and members of CHC committees who are not full members of the CHC. It is not felt necessary to specify in regulations that members should live within the CHC district. They should be able to demonstrate an affinity and interest in the area at the time they are appointed. The suggested maximum of eight years is thought to be about right if there is to be a healthy turnover of members, in order to encourage new people to apply. There is nothing to

prevent former members becoming co-opted members after the eight years is up. The regulations already allow CHCs to reappoint co-opted members after a year if it is felt this is necessary for the performance of the CHC's duties. The disqualification criteria are meant to ensure that there can be no conflict of interest in the membership and that CHCs retain their independence.

5. Training and development of CHC members

One respondent said that consideration should be given to training and development of CHC members being conducted alongside that of Local Health Board members.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

We will give consideration to this suggestion.

6. Direct elections

There were reservations expressed about the suggestion of having direct election arrangements for CHCs. It was felt by some that this might act as a bar to under-represented groups, would not be a guarantee of better expertise and experience, and that it might "politicise" the CHC membership, although it was recognised that it would give CHC members more legitimacy. There were further concerns that creating other elected bodies would confuse democratic accountability, and that elections would be costly and time consuming and for this reason impractical.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

We are still considering the options around elections and will take account of the views expressed.

Part III – Proceedings (Regulations 11-16)

A small number of respondents felt that the regulations did not address the various CHC structures around Wales, e.g. federations, area committees, etc. It was felt that the regulations should cover issues such as disclosure of self-interest. On reports, it was suggested that CHCs should be required to submit annual reports by 1st September each year, and that the CHC Board should then submit its report to the Assembly on 1st October. This would give the CHC Board time to include CHC reports and activities into its report. It was also suggested that a model format for reports could be provided. Also, there was a request that model standing orders could be provided to CHCs

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

It is important that the regulations set out the statutory basis for CHCs. There is no need for them to go into detail about the various administrative structures which exist as these may be changed at any time.

Officials will consider the proposal for the dates of annual reports and whether the regulations should be amended to cover this point. The format of annual reports and standing orders are not matters for the regulations and will be followed up separately by officials in separate guidance. Disclosure of self-interest should also be covered in guidance.

Part IV – Performance of Functions (Regulations 17-22)

1. Consultation of CHCs by NHS bodies

Many felt that the arrangements as set out were adequate and that the intention to involve CHCs at all levels of discussion was welcomed. However, a significant number of respondents felt that the dropping of the term "substantial" and the replacement of it with a more general requirement to consult created a very wide agenda, which could cause problems, not least in the ability of CHCs to respond. Respondents also observed that position of Health Commission Wales (HCW) as part of the Assembly also required resolution. It was felt by these respondents that the wording of Regulation 18 needed to be revised to ensure that the statutory right of CHCs to be consulted on substantial changes, and the mechanism to be followed in the event of disagreement was clearly set out. Otherwise, it was argued, there would be no guarantee that current good practice would be continued. Some respondents felt that the regulations should be strengthened to ensure that changes to primary care services were covered. It was suggested that a comparison be made between the proposed CHC regulations and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Regulations that apply in England to ensure that, where appropriate, intentions that are common to both are expressed in a consistent way.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

We accept the comments received and agree that the wording of Regulation 18 needs to be revised to make clear the mechanism to be followed in the case where substantial change is proposed. We are also working on revised guidance to the NHS on consultation to replace the current out of date guidance. We will give consideration to comments received that a comparison be made with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Regulations.

Consultations conducted by HCW do not fall within the arrangements set out in the Regulations because the Assembly can only make regulations covering bodies mentioned in the enabling power (i.e. Schedule 7A (2)(f) of the NHS Act 1977, as inserted by the Health (Wales) Act 2003). However, the revised guidance will cover the mechanism to be followed for HCW-led consultations, and will almost certainly mirror the good practice we would expect from any NHS organisation. Similarly the regulations cannot stipulate that primary care contractors should consult CHCs, but we would expect LHBs to consult on changes in that sector, if they are agreed as being substantial.

2. Information to be furnished by relevant health bodies

One respondent queried why there was no stipulation in the regulations for NHS bodies to respond to a CHC's request for information within any timescale. The respondent also requested the inclusion of a section requiring NHS bodies to respond to CHC reports with an explanation of action it intends to take or otherwise, again within a stipulated time frame. Both of these issues are set out in the Patients' Forums Regulations.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

It is not felt necessary to stipulate such detail in the regulations. The best way to foster good working relationships is for CHCs and local NHS bodies to agree on working protocols to suit local arrangements.

3. *Enhanced rights of entry and inspection*

Generally, the enhanced rights of entry were welcomed. There was some concern that CHCs might not have sufficient resources to carry out more visits, for example to primary care premises. Some respondents said that the regulations should set out what should happen if a NHS body failed to comply with a request for entry. Other respondents stressed the need for clear protocols for visiting arrangements, and the need for CHCs to work co-operatively with Local Health Boards and the statutory inspectorate bodies. This was felt to be particularly relevant for those premises covered by the Care Standards Act 2000, where there is already heavy regulation of the sector. Most respondents felt that the reason for CHC visits needed to be clearly understood by all those to be visited. One respondent felt that CHC visits were of limited value.

There were mixed views on the subject of unannounced visits. Some felt that they would be helpful and allow CHCs to see premises "as they really are"; others felt that they could disrupt service delivery and would not fit in with true partnership working. It was felt that CHCs should seek to target visits in order to provide evidenced information that can be used to improve health care. There was not much support for having a maximum number of unannounced visits specified in the regulations.

The point was made by more than one respondent that CHC members should be subject to CRB checks if they are to visit premises and that this should be reflected in the regulations. This point was also raised in connection with general membership issues, above. Other respondents raised issues about data protection and patient confidentiality, privacy and dignity; also child protection issues were felt to be relevant if the CHC was to visit an area where children were receiving treatment.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

We agree that the regulations should be amended to require co-operation between CHCs and the

statutory regulatory bodies. Protocols negotiated between CHCs and local NHS bodies will be important in ensuring that this new function is successfully carried out. The Welsh Assembly Government will do all it can to facilitate the development of these protocols, but essentially, it is for CHCs and the NHS locally to reach agreement.

We believe that it is important for CHCs to be able to carry out unannounced visits, but this power should be used sparingly. For example, if, through various complaints received, a CHC observes a worrying trend on which they would like to gather independent evidence, then it should be able to do so. We accept that disruption to service delivery must be kept to a minimum and CHCs should not be looking to use unannounced visits except in the most exceptional circumstances. Visits should normally be conducted in a spirit of partnership and co-operation, not confrontation. We agree that there is probably no need to refer to a maximum number of visits and will look at amending the regulations accordingly. CRB checks are covered in comments above. Other issues relating to patient confidentiality, privacy and dignity etc, can be covered in guidance to CHCs.

4. Independent complaints advocacy

There was general support for the complaints advocacy function and for the need to learn from complaints. Respondents stressed the need for consistency and standards in the handling of complaints by CHCs. Others commented that CHCs should be involved in informing Trust and LHB policies through the proactive use of complaints information and that this could be achieved by CHC staff being engaged in clinical governance meetings, public and patient involvement meetings and complaints sub-committees. One respondent would welcome the sharing of aggregate information on complaints in order to identify national trends, system failures, etc.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

The complaints advocacy service has now been established and is working to a set of agreed standards. The service has also adopted the recently published national standards for children's advocacy. The Welsh Assembly Government will do all it can to foster the sharing of complaints information and supports the idea of CHCs being engaged in the appropriate NHS committees to ensure the proactive use of complaints information.

Part V – The Board of Community Health Councils in Wales (Regulations 23-28)

There was general support for the CHC Board. One respondent felt that CHC members with specific responsibilities for Board work should receive financial compensation. Most respondents felt that the CHC Board had a clear role in awareness-raising, setting standards, developing a training agenda and monitoring the quality of CHC services, with the aim of achieving consistency across Wales. Some

respondents queried the accountability of the CHC Board. One respondent opposed the setting up of the CHC Board on principle.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

The arrangements for the CHC Board have been developed in close co-operation with the CHCs. Work is now underway on systems to measure and develop performance, standard setting and training.

Part VI – Finance (Regulations 29-30)

One respondent commented that there is no provision for the accounts of CHCs or the CHC Board.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

Regulations 29 and 30 set out that the Assembly shall make funding available to CHCs and that CHCs shall keep accounts. As CHCs are not corporate bodies, funding is made via a ring-fenced allocation to Powys Local Health Board, which has overall responsibility for accounting for the funding. The NHS Business Services Centre provides finance services to CHCs including monthly reports of expenditure, which are also presented to the Assembly. All CHCs keep records of their own budget accounts and expenditure.

Part VII – Revocations (Regulation 31)

No comments received.

Schedule

Some minor drafting points were raised which will be addressed.

Change of name

Although this is not a matter for the regulations, consultees were asked their views. There was general support for keeping the name Community Health Council and support for a publicity campaign to ensure that the public and NHS is made better aware of CHCs and what they do. Some also commented on the need for a corporate identity. A few respondents said that the name has sometimes been confused with community councils, a layer of local government and that it does not really reflect the CHCs' responsibilities.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

This matter has already been debated at length by CHCs and it was felt that the actions and visibility of

the CHC is more important than its name. Whilst CHCs do need to have a better profile, many people are familiar with them. It was felt that this should be built upon rather than thrown away. A publicity strategy is being developed, together with a new corporate identity. The Welsh Assembly Government will now work with CHCs to develop their profile both with the public and the NHS.

Boundaries

Again, this is not a matter for the regulations, but views were sought on whether CHC boundaries should be made exactly co-terminous with those of local authorities and LHBs. There was general support for achieving this over time as it was felt to be advantageous when dealing with questions around continuing care, hospital discharge, etc. However, some respondents said that CHCs relate to patient flows associated with local NHS Trusts and general practices and that there should be flexibility enough to recognise this. Some respondents felt that geographical size was a factor and that areas such as Gwynedd and Powys would be too large to be covered effectively by a single CHC. One respondent thought that CHCs could be reorganised on a regional basis.

Welsh Assembly Government comment:

We will wait to see how CHCs settle into their strengthened functions before making any decisions on co-terminosity. The comments will be borne in mind for the future.